

Report on Lessons Learned and Recommendations



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1. Executive Summary

This report analyses the lessons learned, challenges encountered, and best practices identified throughout the implementation of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the Inclusive EduJobs project. The analysis draws on participant feedback, facilitator observations, and evaluation data to inform future capacity-building initiatives targeting Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Municipalities, and Governmental Agencies engaged in promoting inclusive employment and education for Roma and Egyptian (R/E) communities in Albania.

WP4 achieved substantial progress in strengthening institutional and civil society capacities through tailored assessments, targeted trainings, and the establishment of collaborative mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation. Key activities included the capacity development of municipal staff in Tirana, Shkodra, Vlora, and Elbasan, focusing on EU funding procedures, PRAG rules, and project cycle management. The participatory, practice-based methodology proved effective and received highly positive feedback. Training materials will be further adapted into asynchronous e-learning modules to ensure sustainability and broader access across all municipalities.

A needs assessment with Roma and Egyptian CSOs identified gaps in advocacy, policy engagement, and strategic communication, emphasizing the importance of mentoring, peer learning, and continuous organizational support.

Another major achievement was the full establishment of the Constructive Engagement Platform, which became functional during project implementation. The platform brought together CSOs, municipalities, and national institutions through a series of multi-stakeholder workshops that promoted dialogue, cooperation, and joint problem-solving on employment and inclusion issues. The process reinforced the importance of clearly defined roles, structured coordination mechanisms, and sustained institutional ownership.

Building on these achievements, the training materials developed under WP4 have now been converted into online learning modules, ensuring long-term accessibility and sustainability.

Overall, WP4 demonstrated that participatory assessment, tailored training design, and continuous collaboration mechanisms are key to effective capacity building. The Inclusive EduJobs experience highlights the value of interactive learning, cross-sector

cooperation, and sustainable mentoring in advancing inclusive employment and education opportunities for Roma and Egyptian communities across Albania.

2. Purpose and Methodology of the Report

This report serves as a learning tool to inform future capacity-building initiatives and ensure continuity of the project's impact. The purpose of this report is to consolidate the experiential knowledge gained throughout the implementation of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the Inclusive EduJobs project and to present the key lessons learned, challenges encountered, and recommendations for future capacity-building activities. It serves as a reflection and learning tool for project partners, institutions, and beneficiaries, aiming to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term impact of similar initiatives.

The analysis is based on the following data sources collected throughout project implementation, including:

- Training evaluations and participant feedback, assessing relevance, effectiveness, and knowledge gained;
- Facilitator debriefings, capturing observations on participant engagement, learning outcomes, and content delivery;
- Monitoring and evaluation data, including attendance, performance indicators, and satisfaction rates;
- Stakeholder consultations, involving representatives from municipalities, governmental agencies, and R/E CSOs to validate findings and refine recommendations.

This mixed-method approach ensured that the analysis reflects both participant experiences and institutional perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of what worked well, what challenges emerged, and how capacity-building interventions can be further improved in future for similar projects.

2. Overview of Implemented Activities

The capacity-building interventions combined practical training sessions, peer learning opportunities, and multi-stakeholder engagement to strengthen coordination and knowledge exchange among different actors. Training content covered areas such as EU project management, PRAG rules, advocacy and policy engagement, and inclusive employment practices.

Throughout the implementation period, a series of capacity-building activities were delivered to strengthen the competencies of local and central institutions, as well as civil society actors. The table below summarizes the trainings and events implemented under WP4:

Activity	Location	Target Group	Number of Participants
Training on Advocacy - Improving advocacy skills and fostering cooperation between Roma and Egyptian organizations in Albania	Tirana	CSOs	14
Training for municipalities - Capacity Building on the Management of IPA II and IPA III Funds	Tirana	Local institutions	30
Training for municipalities - Capacity Building on the Management of IPA II and IPA III Funds	Vlora	Local institutions	23
Training for municipalities - Capacity Building on the Management of IPA II and IPA III Funds	Elbasan	Local institutions	9
Training for municipalities - Capacity Building on the Management of IPA II and IPA III Funds	Shkodra	Local institutions	8
Training for government agencies - Workshop on Constructive Engagement and Policy Advocacy	Tirana	Central level institutions	13
Study Visit - to exchange knowledge and strengthen collaboration on	Tirana	All stakeholders (institutions,	35

inclusive education and employment models		CSOs)	
Total number of participants			132

In total, 132 participants took part in these activities, exceeding the initial target and reflecting a strong institutional commitment to strengthening inclusive governance.

The broad geographical coverage and diverse participation reflect the project's inclusive approach, ensuring that knowledge and capacity-building efforts reached both central and local levels. The Constructive Engagement Platform became a key coordination mechanism under WP4, providing a structured space for cooperation between civil society and government representatives. The study visit also served as an important exchange platform, fostering dialogue between institutions and civil society representatives and promoting shared learning on good practices in inclusive education and employment.

Overall, the activities under WP4 contributed to creating a stronger foundation for collaboration among key actors and set the stage for sustained institutional engagement in promoting employment and social inclusion for Roma and Egyptian communities across Albania.

3. Key Lessons Learned

3.1. What Worked Well

The project demonstrated that tailored, practice-oriented training leads to high engagement and lasting learning outcomes. Municipal staff benefited from hands-on exercises, case studies, and discussions linking EU procedures with their operational context. Cross-sector participation enriched exchanges and helped bridge institutional gaps between local and national actors.

Feedback from the Constructive Engagement and Policy Advocacy workshop further confirmed that practical, example-driven training resulted in exceptionally high retention (over 80% of content recalled) and participant satisfaction. Trainees highlighted the empathetic and accessible facilitation style, the relevance of EU case studies, and the value of multi-sector group composition in fostering constructive dialogue between central and local actors.

The workshop on IPA II and IPA III Fund Management, conducted in all four municipalities, demonstrated the strong relevance of the capacity-building content to municipal operations. Participants emphasized that the training directly addressed their professional responsibilities and clarified complex aspects of EU project processes and grant procedures. The practical focus and contextual examples helped municipal staff better understand how to align their duties with EU funding requirements. Feedback from the training indicated that many participants had limited prior exposure to EU fund management procedures. The workshop effectively filled these gaps, increasing participants' confidence in handling IPA projects and promoting a stronger culture of accountability and efficiency within the municipal administration.

For Roma and Egyptian CSOs, the advocacy training improved understanding of policy processes, strategic communication, and evidence-based advocacy. The successful operationalization of the Constructive Engagement Platform was a major milestone. Its workshops enhanced dialogue between CSOs, municipalities, and government agencies, encouraging collaborative approaches to policy design and implementation.

3.2. Challenges Encountered

While the implementation of WP4 was largely successful, several challenges emerged that offer important lessons for future programming:

- Varying institutional capacities among municipalities required differentiated training approaches;
- High staff turnover in key institutions occasionally disrupted continuity and follow-up;
- Differences in prior knowledge among participants created uneven levels of engagement during training;
- Limited time availability restricted opportunities for more advanced simulations and policy exercises;
- Institutional barriers, including bureaucratic processes, slowed coordination and implementation; and

- Need for continuity, as participants expressed strong interest in ongoing mentoring and networking opportunities to consolidate learning and apply new skills in practice.
- Participants also noted that the high workload within municipal departments often limits their ability to dedicate time to project management and implementation. Balancing regular duties with additional EU project responsibilities remains a key institutional challenge that future capacity-building activities should consider through time management and workload optimization modules.

Addressing these challenges in future capacity-building cycles will help ensure greater institutional integration, sustainability, and measurable long-term impact.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The implementation of Work Package 4 (WP4) has significantly strengthened institutional and civil society capacities while fostering lasting cooperation among key actors engaged in promoting the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania. The results demonstrate that comprehensive capacity building, combining training, mentoring, peer learning, and institutional collaboration, produces measurable improvements in knowledge, coordination, and long-term impact.

Building on the experience from the municipal trainings in Tirana, Shkodër, Elbasan, and Vlora, as well as the Constructive Engagement and Policy Advocacy workshop, several important conclusions and recommendations emerge for future action:

Capacity Building and Learning Models:

- Adopt blended and flexible learning approaches – Training materials developed under WP4 have been converted into asynchronous online learning modules, now available to all municipalities and institutions. These modules extend access to a wider audience and ensure sustainability of learning outcomes.
- Develop a trainer-of-trainers model based on the Constructive Engagement curriculum to replicate and scale capacity-building efforts across institutions.

- Plan annual refresher and mentoring sessions to reinforce participants' advocacy and engagement competencies and ensure knowledge retention over time.

Institutional Strengthening and Knowledge Transfer:

- Continue and expand capacity-building efforts on IPA fund management to strengthen long-term institutional competence in EU project implementation and fund absorption.
- Bridge knowledge gaps – Design targeted sessions connecting experienced and less experienced municipal staff to ensure a comprehensive understanding of IPA procedures and project cycle management.
- Broaden participation – Encourage the inclusion of diverse municipal departments, technical, social, environmental, and administrative, to ensure knowledge diffusion across all sectors.
- Customize future trainings to address operational challenges such as workload management, administrative coordination, and the practical application of EU standards in daily municipal work.

Advocacy, Coordination, and Engagement:

- Strengthen CSO advocacy capacities – Deliver advanced workshops on evidence-based advocacy, policy monitoring, and strategic communication to enhance the influence of Roma and Egyptian CSOs in policymaking.
- Consolidate the Constructive Engagement Platform – Maintain regular workshops and structured dialogue mechanisms connecting CSOs, municipalities, and government agencies, fostering joint problem-solving and shared ownership of inclusion policies.

Monitoring, Feedback, and Sustainability:

- Institutionalize mentoring and follow-up mechanisms – Create ongoing peer-learning platforms to facilitate cross-institutional collaboration and experience sharing.
- Promote data-driven planning – Continue participatory needs assessments and feedback analysis to adapt training content to evolving institutional and community needs.
- Introduce continuous feedback systems – Establish structured evaluation mechanisms to refine workshop content and ensure sustained relevance and effectiveness.
- Encourage replication and scaling – Expand the WP4 capacity-building model to other municipalities and regional contexts to amplify its national impact.

The Inclusive EduJobs project has built a robust foundation for continuous institutional learning and cooperation. Through its integrated approach embedding sustainable training systems, converting materials into online learning modules, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and maintaining active dialogue via the Constructive Engagement Platform, the project contributes meaningfully to long-term social inclusion, improved governance, and equal opportunities for Roma and Egyptian communities across Albania.

